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Greetings  
from the  
Attention Deficit  
and Hyperactivity  
Support Group of  
Southern Africa

**ADHASA**

Helping the community  
for  years!

Useful information  
to help families with  
ADHD, and others ...

Please send this  
newsletter to  
anyone who could  
use it.

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*Please note that  
ADHD refers to  
Attention Deficit  
Disorder with or  
without hyperactivity.*

# Keeping up with ADD

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## It's No Joke!



**“My hyperactive child goes out of his way to misinterpret things said to him. Jokes make him angry and irritable. Is this just**

**naughtiness or could it be part of his ADHD?”**

We cannot blame every problem on **ADD/ADHD however it's always** worth finding out if there could be a link. Understanding why a child behaves in a certain manner makes it easier to deal with situations that arise.

Children with ADHD are often very verbal, but this does not mean they are good communicators. Communication between people depends not only on the words spoken, but also on the unspoken word. Reading between the lines, understanding body language, and interpreting emotional content are all important tools used for effective communication, but many **children with ADHD don't have**

**these skills. As a result they don't** understand the emotional content of language.

**Often they can't tell the difference** between a request such as "Climb down from that branch" (possibly for some cookies) and the same words "Climb down from that branch" growled through clenched teeth. They hear just the words - they do not pick up the emotions that accompany them nor do they read the body language. They carry on, blissfully unaware of the speaker's emotional state and increasing anger - and then wonder why they are regularly in trouble.



Sometimes there are misunderstandings because children with ADHD can take things very literally. They may be very hurt or frightened by an angry or careless remark: "I'll kill you when we get home tonight!" The hyperactive child believes that this is really going to happen!

In the same way using innuendo is often lost on them - consider the following situation:

**Ben's playing around has delayed his** mother to such an extent that she is both late and furious. "Are you coming!!!" She shouts, expecting Ben to jump up and run to the car but he **doesn't pick up the innuendo. Also he can't read his mother's body's** language, nor does he realise how angry she is. All he hears is the simple question "Are you coming?"



He reckons that he has an option and answers "No!" His mother loses her temper and hits him. She is upset that her child is so rude and cheeky but Ben cannot

understand why he should be smacked for answering **his mother's question.**

Because they cannot understand innuendo, or the play **on words, it's very difficult for them to follow a joke.** Many children with ADHD react angrily when siblings tell jokes simply because, once again, they feel left out. Parents are often at a loss when it comes to dealing with situations like these.

These challenges also spill over into their schoolwork. Comprehension usually requires that they read more into the passage than they are able to; so they seldom score well in this area.

**It's unfair to expect children with ADHD to act and** react in the same way as others, especially when they **don't have the same skills at recognising and** interpreting information. However they must live in the real world and ultimately must learn to cope. Frequently they are slow developers and so it takes longer for them. This means that these children will experience a few knocks and maybe some teasing which makes it all the more important that their families are aware of their difficulties and try to accommodate them:

\* Don't take it for granted that your child can read body language. Simply say "I have asked you to clean your shoes twice already. You haven't yet cleaned them and I am cross. Get up and clean your shoes now!"

\* Avoid using sarcasm and don't expect children with ADHD to read hidden messages.

\* If you expect your child to accompany you, don't ask, "Are you coming?" because this gives him the option to say "no". Rather tell him what you want him to do: "I am ready to leave. Hurry up and come along."

\* Jokes are fun for most and should be encouraged but avoid long joke sessions that your child may not understand. If possible, be aware of any type of joke that he enjoys and build up a joking relationship based on

Contact Lorí (071-226-3451—  
NEW cell number)  
Lori@MindFocus.co.za), if you  
are serious about coaching.

[Instant ADD Success](#)

(click for "Self Improvement for  
People with ADD/ADHD.)



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that kind of joke. Move to the next level when he is ready to do so.

Above all listen to your child. Watch his reactions and become aware of messages that work. Why did he/she react to one message and not the other? What was the difference between them? How did you communicate the information? Use these pointers to develop a communication strategy that is meaningful to you both.

At first this approach demands more effort from the parents, however it could be well worth the effort. Better and trouble-free communication would benefit the entire family. It would make life far more comfortable for children with ADHD.

*Heather Picton*

## Is it a real saving?

Traditionally we have always used full spectrum lighting in our homes. Because of the energy crisis, we are all switching to energy saving or fluorescent light bulbs - but could there be a downside to them?



In 1974 Mayron and Ott published a study on artificial light and the behaviour of children with ADD (at that time the terminology used for ADHD). A special classroom was prepared with both fluorescent and full spectrum lights. The researchers were able to switch from one kind of light to the other without the children or the teacher being aware of it.

They found that children with ADD became more nervous, noisy and disruptive when the fluorescent lighting was switched on. They calmed down when the fluorescent lighting was switched off and replaced with full spectrum light.

The researchers suggested that full spectrum lights be installed in your home.

**It seems that it's not only humans that are being affected:** Feingold in 1975 cited a study conducted at the University of West Virginia in which fruit flies exposed to fluorescent light after being fed yellow food dye, died of hyperactivity-caused exhaustion.

*Professor  
CF van der Merwe*

### *Editors Note:*

*It might be interesting to experiment with different lighting while your children are doing homework. Use full spectrum lighting in your children's rooms for a few days and then switch to energy saving light bulbs. Compare their behaviour and concentration with the different lightings – you would have to try to make sure that other factors are basically the same.*

*There is also a disposal hazard as these energy saving fluorescent lights contain mercury.*

### **Ideas for Sandwiches** *with Thanks to Feingold Association (USA)*



- **Tuna salad goes well with** chopped celery, zucchini slices, chives, onions, walnuts or grated carrot.
- **Peanut butter goes well with jam,** honey, fresh fruit slices such as pear or banana, chopped nuts, cream cheese, dried fruit or shredded carrot.
- **Cheese goes well with lettuce,** sprouts, sliced pears, leftover meat or poultry.
- **Cream cheese goes well with** chopped dates, fresh fruit slices, dried fruit, cashews, seeds, grated carrots, sprouts, pineapple slices or shredded coconut.
- **Chicken or turkey goes well with** chopped celery, lettuce and cheese.
- **A winning combination is a blend** of cream cheese, peanut butter and honey. Add nuts or dried fruits if you like. This makes a great sandwich filler and a good snack to serve on crackers.



We're often so focussed on the problems of ADHD that we don't see their strengths. Our art competition is designed to help us recognise these strengths, and it's open to all schoolchildren.

[Get your entry form -  
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